# SRIRANGAM AND TIRUCHIRAPALLI PROCLAMATIONS OF MARUDU PANDYAN.

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In the course of my research on the South Indian Rebellion of 1800-1801 I came across two proclamations of almost identical contents they were issued by Marudu Pandyan, who organised a formidable confederacy of the rebels with the declared object of liberating Jambu Dweepa from European sway. Beginning his career as betel bearer in the service of the Rajah of Sivaganga, he emerged as a popular figure and minister of the State. The English, supported by the Rajahs of Mysore, Travancore and Pudukkottai, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Peshwa of Poona, suppressed the rebellion by the end of the year 1801. Marudu Pandyan, together with his elder brother, sons and grand sons, was executed at Tirupatore (behind the Police Station) in Ramnad district. His body was buried at Tirupatore, now within the Swedesh Mission Hospital Compound and head was buried separately at Kalayarkoil. The place where these leaders were executed remains neglected spot. Duraiswami, the youngest son of Marudu Pandyan, together with other leaders, was banished to Prince of Wales Island, Malacca.

Issued in the context of the Rebellion in South India, 1800-1801 the proclamation constitutes a remarkable document in the history of India's struggle for freedom. Not only does it reflect upon the political awakening experienced by South India as the eighteenth century advanced towards its end, but sheds light upon the factors that contributed to the outbreaks. On the 16th of June 1801 Tamil copies of these proclamations reached the notice of the English. The one that appeared on a wall in Srirangam made an earnest appeal to all the people of Jambu Dweepa to unite and fight for freedom. Almost of identical contents, the second that appeared on the Fort of Tiruchirapalli at the gate leading to the Nawab's palace inside, issued a similar address but exclusively to the inhabitants of the peninsula of Jambu Dweepa. The English prepared the translations and preserved them in Revenue Sundries for the year 1801 but destroyed the originals. The selection of Tiruchirappalli as the site of this proclamations is of the particular significance for it was the centre of cultural, political and military activity in the South during this period.

Inspired by an all India-concept, it directed all the sections of the society including those, inhabitants, who took service with the alien powers, to rally to the standard of revolt. If the rebels, as the proclamation stipulated, never wanted the assistance of the people whose blood was "contaminated by the Europeans", it was because of their undiluted pride of nationalism. It may be argued whether they equated the Kingdom of Jambu with India; but this doubt is removed by the second proclamation, for it refers South India as the Peninsula of Jambu Dweepa. The words "devised and determined" used in the text assert the organised character of the insurrection-organised by the peasant-leaders of South India, of whom Marudu Pandyan was indeed the most conspicuous. Unprejudiced by any conservative or communal interests the patriots saw their political malady in its correct perspective, for the proclamation declared: caste hatred, alliance with unequal powers, violation of faith by the Europeans and duplicity of the English inexorably led the country to political humiliation as well as economic deterioration. The insurgents entertained a positive concept of freedom, for in the destruction of alien hegemony, they saw the possibility of the realisation of political independence and the attainment of economic prosperity. In consonance with their liberal traditions, they matched their determination to liquidate the mastery of the Europeans with a desire to permit them a non-political existence. Perhaps the proclamation went wrong when it advocated the hereditary rights of the rajahs, for the monarchy failed to stand the test of time. However, when the patriots liberated extensive territories from the British rule, they never attempted the implementation of this stipulation. They advocated the hereditary rights, championed national customs and appealed to religious convictions, for without which they never knew for certain whether they could enlist the support of all the sections of the population against the alien powers and their Indian allies.

TEXT OF THE PROCLAMATIONS

Whoever sees this paper read it with attention. To the countries and castes of the Kingdom of Semboo-the Brahmins, Kshetriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras and Mussalmans-this notice is given.

His Highness the Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan, having foolishly given the Europeans place amongst you, became like a widow. Violating their faith, the Europeans deceitfully made the Kingdom their own and considering the inhabitants as dogs, they exercise authority over you. There existing no unity and friendship among you, the different castes, who not aware of the duplicity of these Europeans have not only caluminated each other, but have absolutely surrendered the Kingdom to them. In these countries now governed by these low wretches, the inhabitants have become poor and rice has become water. Although the people manifestly suffer, they still lack an understanding to discern it. The great rajahs and people by the injustice of the low wretches are now reduced to poverty-so great a people as you are, reduced to this state.

It is certain that a man must die although he may live a thousand years and it is certain that his fame will survive him as long as the sun and moon shine. It is devised and determined that unless the Europeans do henceforward restore to the rightful sovereign hereditary rights without any violation of faith and national customs, and confine themselves to a dependent service-from which they expect to derive a real and uninterrupted happiness-every man in his stalam and palayam should fly to arms and unite together in order to make even the name of the low wretches cease. Then all the poor and needy will get sustenances. As the authority of the Europeans will be destroyed, we shall enjoy constant happiness without tears. But should there be any who like dogs desirous of an easy life obey the command of the low wretches, should be cut off; whoever serves the low wretches will never enjoy eternal bliss.

As all know with what subtility these low wretches always in unity with each other have subdued this country. Therefore you Brahmins, Kshetriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras and

Mussalmans who all wear whiskers whether civil or military, serving in the field or elsewhere and you subedars, jamedars, naiks and sepoys in the service of these low wretches and all capable of bearing arms, let them in the first instance display their bravery as follows: wherever you find any of the low wretches destroy them and continue to do so until they are extirpated. He who does not subscribe to this, may his whiskers be of no meaning and his food be without taste and nourishment. All but whose blood is not contaminated by the Europeans may unite.

Whoever reads this or hears its contents let him make it as public as possible by writing and sending it to his friends who in like manner must publish to others. Every one who shall not write it and circulate it as before mentioned, let him be held as guilty of the enormous crime of having killed a black cow on the bank of the Ganga and suffer all the various punishments of hell. Whoever takes this off the wall where it is pasted, let him be held as guilty of the five greatest sins.

Thus Marudu Pandyan, the servant of the great rajahs but the implicable enemy of the European low wretches. To all the people living at Srirangam - the priests and great people- Marudu Pandyan prostrates himself at their feet. Grant me your Blessing.

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